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The Evolution of Deaf Education in the United States- A Historical Analysis with Recommendations for Enhancing Deaf Education in the Future

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Introduction

According to Susan Fischer in "Issues Unresolved: New Perspectives on Language and Deaf Education" she writes "Since at least the time of l'Epee two hundred years ago, there has been a dynamic tension in the purpose of deaf education: is it to teach deaf people about the world or is it to make them part of the world?" (35). This quote is significant in the sense that people with disabilities have been discriminated against for several years, especially in the education realm. One of the main reasons for this discrimination includes a lack of understanding regarding their needs in the classroom, as well as viewing education through an ableist lens that does not include the voices of people with disabilities. It is because of these injustices and the lack of discourse surrounding this subject that I chose to focus my project on deaf education in the United States. After working with the deaf community for several years through the Connecticut Inclusive Arts program, as well as the American School for the Deaf, I became fascinated with deaf culture and education. It sparked my interest to further learn the issues deaf folks may face as well as provide effective solutions to these problems.

Thus, I asked myself the following research question: how have public perceptions and teaching methods of deaf education changed overtime? Through a historical analysis of deaf education in the United States as well as integrating case studies of deaf children and key analyses of issues, I highlight how people's perceptions of deaf education have changed over the

past 200 years. I also analyze the trajectory of teaching methods, such as sign language and speech training. I then make recommendations for the future of deaf education so it can be more inclusive of deaf voices and not diminish vital aspects of deaf culture. After studying deaf education's tumultuous and contentious history in the United States, especially with public perceptions and teaching methods, it is clear to see that it is important to listen to the voices of deaf folks. It is also vital that educators and legislators take into account various additional societal and cultural factors when making decisions about deaf education. It is through analyzing key points in history as well as learning and identifying issues that arose from past public perceptions and teaching methods that vital recommendations for deaf education's future can be created.

Structure of Project

This paper will first begin with with an explanation of my methods for this project, as well as a literature review that will highlight sources vital to my research, and recurring themes from these sources. I then split my historical analysis into three sections- the 19th century, 20th century, and 21st century. I begin my analysis with the year 1817, because that is when Laurent Clerc and Thomas Gallaudet, two key players in the formulation of deaf education in the United States, founded the Connecticut School for the Deaf and Dumb (now known as the American School for the Deaf in West Hartford, Connecticut). While I do not delve into every single detail of deaf education in each century, I analyze key issues from each time period that I believe helped to shape the trajectory of deaf education. Additionally, I narrowed my focus in this project to deaf education in the United States specifically for sake of research time frame for this project.

While deafness affects persons of all ages, my main focus centers on children roughly from infants until 18 years old, simply because I am looking at methods of instruction and policies pertaining to deafness in K-12 schools. Towards the end of my project, I also include recent case studies that highlights various deaf children, which helps support arguments I will make later about analyzing deaf education through an intersectional look at the cultural and societal experiences of deaf children. All of the aforementioned sections of my thesis ultimately inform my perception of deaf education and the recommendations I believe will help deaf education thrive in the future.

Methods

I utilized a variety of methods to conduct my research. Most of my research is qualitative, relying on both primary and secondary sources to amplify my historical analysis. For instance, I included articles and cultural artifacts from both the 19th and 20th centuries. I analyzed sermons, attendance lists from deaf schools, textbooks from these time periods, letters to legislators, as well as current research perspectives during these time periods. I also looked at a film which documents perspectives from people who are deaf as well as deaf educators. It was important for me to include these primary accounts in order to truly understand the ideologies behind deaf people and educators during this time, and how that has influenced deaf education's trajectory overtime. While some of my sources from the 21st century are primary sources, they are mostly secondary sources. Most of these accounts are authored by scholars who are also looking at deaf education from a historical lens. They analyze prior teaching methods and include their personal recommendations and insights to help improve deaf education. This collection of primary and

secondary qualitative sources allows me to gauge varying perspectives from different time periods through the lens of people who existed during these times. It also grants me the opportunity to read the work of scholars who compare and contrast historical significances of deaf education over the past 200 years.

While my methods are mostly qualitative, I incorporate some quantitative data as well. Another source I include, the case studies of deaf children, is a secondary source that delves into the stories of numerous children, including their upbringing and any issues with their educational outcomes. Some of these studies include statistical facts about the child's educational progression. While it is a small part of my thesis, these statistics help inform my recommendations section as well as supports my argument that viewing deaf education through an intersectional lens is vital. Therefore, my methods incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data, analyzing cultural artifacts over the past 200 years as well as listening to the experiences of children, parents, educators, and scholars.

Literature Review

I initially started with my research question, stated here once again: how have public perceptions and teaching methods in deaf education changed overtime? As I searched for literature that attempted to answer this question, I knew that discovering literature that captured the experiences of both deaf folks and deaf educators was crucial for my analysis. I did not limit myself to one type of scholarly work, since I did not want to limit the themes that would be illuminated by several pieces of literature.

Historic Lack of Understanding/Ableist Dominance

Deaf education has historically been widely misunderstood, and viewed through an ableist lens. Ableism is defined as "discrimination in favor of able-bodied people" (dictionary.com). This discrimination feeds into a lack of understanding regarding deaf education and its teaching methods. In a piece written by Laurent Clerc, entitled "A Public Examination of Pupil's in the Connecticut Asylum" he wrote to Connecticut legislators, attempting to gain funding from them for the American School for the Deaf (which they eventually secured in 1819). In this address, Clerc explains the importances of having a deaf school as well as teaching deaf children. He is deaf himself, which helps inform his argument and his experiences. Since deaf education is incredibly new in the United States at this time, he explains various details regarding it, including sign language. He describes steps taken to learn sign language, as well as how it can be used to explain both simple words as well as complex thoughts, like philosophy and religion (Clerc 5). This document proves to be a very important staple as far as increasing the understanding of deaf education and the importance of teaching. This is why Laurent Clerc describes his experience as a deaf person as well as sign language in an in depth way. It was his mechanism for garnering understanding of a very new concept in the United States.

However, even as time went on, deaf education was viewed through an ableist lens. After watching the film *Through Deaf Eyes*, it touched upon theories in the United States around the late 19th century to early 20th century. The film discussed the oralism verses manualism debate, which occurred around 1860 and continued into the 20th century. People began to fear sign language during this time, with some of this fear being attributed to two rampant theories:

nativism and eugenics. Backed particularly by Alexander Graham Bell, nativism was concerned with the influx of immigrants from Europe, and eugenics promoted a "survival of the fittest" philosophy. People started to worry that if deaf people married and had children with other deaf people, then it would produce a race "inferior" to others (Through Deaf Eyes). This produces an ableist view of deaf people and their education, since sign language is almost seen as "barbaric" and not a part of the world in which deaf people should be a part of. It was also interesting to gain a firsthand perspective on the Gallaudet University protest in 1988. While there were numerous candidates for the president position at the university, the Board of Trustees chose the only hearing candidate. This caused various protests at the university, with many deaf students pleading for their voices to be heard. While their demands were officially enacted, it still shows how decisions were made without their input. Therefore, through this literature, it is evident that people not a part of the deaf community not only have a lack of understanding, but continue to make decisions for the deaf community without proper information or listening to deaf voices.

Intersectionality/Consideration of All Experiences

Another theme that emerged throughout my readings included the intersectionality of experiences with deaf folks. Deafness is often viewed through a singular lens, however, this literature illuminates the fact that it is important to look at the variety of experiences someone may have- not just their deafness. This struck me particularly with the case studies I analyzed in *Case Studies in Deaf Education: Inquiry, Application, and Resources*. With the children I studied, they were all deaf, but some struggled more, or had different experiences than other children. This was often due to a variety of factors, including race, parental involvement in their

education, languages spoken at home, etc. I delve into these case studies more later on, however, the prominent theme that emerged was the intersectionality of experiences with these children, and how that may influence their educational outcomes.

This additionally occurred in a piece entitled “Deaf Identity in Adolescence.” This work discusses deaf identity and deaf culture, and how this can vary based on where someone grew up, or even when they were taught (or if they ever were taught) sign language (de Klerk 19). Based on a program the piece discusses, the Rotterdam Deaf Awareness Program, it showed that participants often feel different ways about themselves and their relation to deaf culture. This shows that identity can depend on numerous factors, and the way one experiences life as a deaf person is different based on the varying experiences they had.

Lastly, this intersectionality/consideration of all experiences is also shown in society with cochlear implants. These devices were approved in 1988 for adults and 2000 for children. They have been a source of contention for the deaf community, since several people have different experiences than others. An article called “Hear Me Out” from Missouri medicine describes numerous reactions deaf people had to receiving implants for the first time. The media tends to sensationalize videos of children receiving cochlear implants for the first time, but the author of this article discusses how some people cry when they receive implants for the first time due to the initial overwhelming amount of noises (Cooper 4). This can influence deaf education methods as well, since sometimes, educators will not make an effort to teach American Sign Language, or accommodate any other needs the child has since the teacher assumes they need no additional help if they have implants. Thus, this piece shows why it is important to consider all

experiences of deaf folks. This also feeds into ableist dominance as well. If intersectionality and consideration is not taken into account with deaf folks, deaf education will not improve in the future. This literature highlights intersectional experiences of deaf folks, which helped inform my recommendations for the future of deaf education.

Deaf Education 19th Century: A New Beginning

After both meeting for the first time in England, they collectively decided to bring deaf education to the United States. Thus, Thomas Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc founded what is now known as the American School for the Deaf on April 15th, 1817. The school was the first of its kind in the United States, significant for its revolutionary teaching methods at the time- mainly the development of American Sign Language. Both Clerc and Gallaudet utilized teachings from French educator Abbe Sicard, who founded a deaf school in France and pioneered the use of sign language. ASL was largely based off of Sicard's version and ideas about sign language.

The school began to gain prominence, especially in the Hartford community. Deafness and deaf education was a ver new concept in America, so it was important to both Clerc and Gallaudet that the importance of their project was understood. In Clerc's public address to Connecticut legislators, he opens with the following line: "The origin of the discovery of the art of teaching the Deaf and Dumb is so little known in this country, that I think necessary to repeat it" (Clerc 1). Since deaf education was quite a new feat in America, Clerc's incessancy with this line allows legislators to know why this school is important. Additionally, since sign language was a new method of teaching students at the time, Clerc provides an in depth explanation of sign language in his address. He explains the universality of sign language by saying "and the

Deaf and Dumb of whatever country they may be, can understand each other as well as you who hear and speak…" (Clerc 3). He also goes into detail regarding Sicard's teachings in order for the legislators to understand the intricacies of sign language. Clerc emphasizes that Sicard taught simple concepts like nouns, verbs, adjectives. However, Sicard also taught deaf people philosophical concepts like religion. Clerc expands upon Sicard's method of teaching both basic and broader concepts so the legislators can comprehend how sign language compares to the English language and the world as a whole, showing that it is not too different from English itself. The address was delivered in 1818, and that year, another proclamation was set forth by Governor Oliver Wolcott, who encouraged the public "to aid . . . in elevating the condition of a class of mankind, who have been heretofore considered as incapable of mental improvement, but who are now found to be susceptible of instruction in the various arts and sciences…" A year later, in 1819, the school received a $300,000 grant from the Connecticut government as well. These examples show that deaf education was not only becoming more understood, but it became a priority as far as funding in society.

While this was the case in the first half of the 19th century, a shift in deaf education, and disability studies itself occurred in the latter half of the century. If people were considered disabled in the eyes of society, then they were segregated, and often placed in abusive institutions or impoverished areas. Disabled children were not integrated into mainstream education, which further emphasized the importance of the American School for the Deaf. However, ideas about deaf education shifted drastically as proponents of oralism began to demand that sign language be banned from schools. This was due to shifting attitudes about

people with disabilities as well as the circulation of Darwinism that gained notoriety during this time. Darwinism emphasized certain philosophies like “survival of the fittest” and “natural selection” which often targeted people with disabilities (Minnesota Council). While Clerc and Gallaudet worked diligently to have the public understand the benefits of sign language, it started to diminish as changing attitudes moved away from sign language and moved into teaching deaf people to speak orally. Even Abbe Sicard, a pioneer for sign language, started to use the oral method of teaching later in his life (Cogswell Heritage House). Public perceptions of people with disabilities and deaf people clearly shifted in the second half of the 19th century. Having a perceived disability meant that one was segregated from, and not seen as a part of society. This is observed by the words of an oral speech advocate, Gardiner Greene Hubbard, who writes “mutes are always foreigners among their own kindred, nay, more than foreigners, for our speech is for them absolutely unattainable” (Hubbard 23). Even though Clerc explained the intricacies of sign language not long before Hubbard’s 1867 book, it merely became forgotten, or did not matter, in the eyes of oralists.

Key take aways from deaf education in the 19th century are as follows. Since it was such a new concept in the United States, it was important for key figures like Clerc and Gallaudet to explain the importance of a school for the deaf as well as their sign language teaching methods. Public perceptions were positive during this point, as legislators and governors encouraged public aid to the school, which resulted in an additional grant from the government. However, as Darwinism grew more popular as well as oralism in the latter half of the 19th century, people

with disabilities were cast away from society, and this alteration in public perceptions and teaching methods of deaf education continued into the 20th century.

Deaf Education 20th Century: Two Worlds

It seems like a paradox that American Sign Language, started by two pioneers of deaf education in the United States, was unable to be taught anywhere, even in deaf schools. The early to mid 20th century is described as a "dark time" for deafness in America (*Through Deaf Eyes)*. As stated briefly in my literature review, the 20th century saw a rise in two theories- nativism and eugenics. During the early 1900's, the United States saw an influx of immigrants from various areas in Europe. Americans grew worried, since immigrant groups that came into the country often started their own cultural groups and schools. Nativism negatively impacted public perceptions of deaf education. Americans wanted to preserve what they perceived as their own culture at the time, and often viewed deaf people and schools as their own culture. Nativism influenced the worries America had about deafness, since they feared with so many differing cultures, what they thought to be the "true America" would become defunct.

Another theory that gained prominence in the 20th century was eugenics. Both nativism and eugenics were backed by popular inventor Alexander Graham Bell, whom many Americans looked up to. Ironically, he was described as the "worst thing to happen to deaf education in America" (*Through Deaf Eyes*) because of his attachment to these discriminatory theories. As far as eugenics, the whole premise of it centered around human reproduction, and producing children that would have "desirable characteristics" that people would want to see continue in order to create a more "perfect" human race (*Through Deaf Eyes*). Eugenics was actually used by

the Nazi regime in order to justify its horrid treatment of people, particularly Jews and disabled individuals. Because of the circulation of eugenics, Americans grew worried that deaf people would procreate to make more deaf humans, which would be considered distasteful in the eyes of Americans since deafness was seen as an "undesirable" trait. Eugenics was another theory that altered public perceptions since deafness was seen as negative, and not a desirable trait in a human.

With these two theories, deafness slowly slipped away from what was known as the "typical world." Deafness started to be described as a whole different planet in the eyes of society, since many did not view deaf people and sign language as being a part of the hearing world (*Through Deaf Eyes*).

The continuation of the ostracizing and excluding of deaf folks continued with the emergence of deaf boarding schools. Parents would drop their children off as young as four years old, believing that their child would be educated to their fullest extent. While they were provided with an education, sign language was not only not taught, but there were severe punishments for using it. Punishments included wearing white gloves over your hands that were tied together (*Through Deaf Eyes*). Instead of sign language, students were encouraged to lip read and undergo speech training, although this was not always the most effective way to learn. Instructors at these schools were typically hearing individuals as well, so they did not have personal experiences with deafness. This was a huge step backwards for deaf education, particularly with teaching methods. While the early nineteenth century included sign language teachings and the

development of ASL, it was now banned, focusing on oralist methods as opposed to sign language.

While sign language was banned from being taught in classrooms, students in these boarding schools still signed in secret, away from any instructors. According to *Through Deaf Eyes*, this began the rise of "deaf culture" with sign language becoming an integral part of that culture. With huge proponents of oralism attempting to strip away this vital aspect of deaf culture, it shows how Americans at the time truly feared cultures different than what was perceived as the "American culture." Teaching methods were also heavily influenced by ableism, with teachers and people instituting instruction in deaf schools not listening to deaf voices nor having the knowledge or the experience of being deaf themselves. Public perceptions and teaching methods of deaf education were both fueled with a lack of understanding between discriminatory theories and an attempt to eliminate deaf culture and assimilate deaf children by using oralism.

Another key event in the 20th century that is worth noting is the Gallaudet University 1988 protest called Deaf President Now. During this year, the university was seeking a new president, and were excited that some of the candidates were deaf. This meant that the university had an opportunity to select their first deaf president. Students waited anxiously to hear who the new president would be. However, they were outraged when they discovered that the Board of Trustees selected the only hearing candidate of the applicants. This resulted in protests at the university, with students outraged that their voices were not listened to. This caused the university to shut down as students carried multiple signs, with one of the most notable borrowed

from the Civil Rights Movement, which read “We Still Have a Dream.” After the protest, however, students were able to make significant changes. The president elect stepped down so the university would have their first deaf president. The Board of Trustees director resigned as well, and the university also agreed to other demands put forth by the students.

This protest had far reaching implications beyond Gallaudet University itself. Deaf students were able to show that their voices mattered and should be taken seriously. It was an act of autonomy that proved that deaf people were capable of creating change and were just as intelligent and productive as neurotypical citizens in society. A couple years following this protest, in 1990, George H.W. Bush passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which laid out monumental stipulations that the United States had to follow to make the country more accessible.

Key points to take away from this century is the ableism that persisted during this time with nativism, eugenics, and oralism. All these theories negatively affected how the public viewed deaf education and teaching methods that were taught in deaf schools. However, later in the century, as observed with the Deaf President Now protest, the voices of deaf folks started to be heard and taken seriously. While this would continue into the 21st century as well as various other pieces of legislation that would be enacted, challenges with deaf education still persisted, especially with numerous factors pertaining to intersectionality as well as technological advances.

Deaf Education 21st Century: Technology and More

Numerous advances occurred in the 21st century, both in schools and through science. While the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) began in 1975, its usage became more developed and defined in the 21st century. Deaf schools also proliferated across the United States, as well as deaf children being integrated into mainstream schools. I focus on numerous advances in this section, explaining their implications for deaf education.

Programming for students became more personalized, abandoning "old notions of disability as residing within or being a characteristic of a person. It instead focuses on the interaction between the individual; his or her personal characteristics…" (Wehmeyer 11). Other principles, such as the Universal Design of Learning grew stronger in the disability community, focusing on eliminating barriers to both physical and educational access by creating lesson plans and/or ramps and buildings that could be accessible and inclusive of all (Wehmeyer). The 21st century became a highly technological era as well, which allowed educational and assistive technology to emerge. Later, I discuss cochlear implants specifically, and their impact on deaf culture and public perceptions.

While the opportunity for integration in mainstream schooling may seem like a huge step for deaf children, it does not always prove to be the most effective solution. Even though many public schools have special educators, not all of them are well versed in deaf education. Deaf children, even with individualized programming, continue to struggle in public schools. This can be attributed to a variety of reasons, including "a lack of understanding" (Agro 3). Nicole Agro explains in her piece "Public Education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students" that "it is impossible for people to truly understand what it is like to be deaf or hard of hearing" (Agro 3).

If teachers are not trained in deaf education, for example, if they cannot discern how much information a student with hearing loss retains, then "a teacher cannot be expected to be prepared to assist the child properly" (Agro 3). Agro also says that "teachers can also make incorrect assumptions regarding the learning abilities, behavior, and comprehension of deaf and hard of hearing students" (3). When teachers interpret a deaf child's education without fully knowing their situation or without the proper training to help them, then their teaching methods will not be as effective as they could be. Despite integration in public schools, there are still areas for improvement.

Even though sign language is not banned from public schools and is widely accepted, it is still not used as prominently as one might believe, especially when it comes to teaching deaf children. Theories circulated that if deaf children were taught sign language, it would be detrimental to their language acquisition of a spoken language."Critical Periods for Language Acquisition" states that "historically many deaf children were not exposed to any form of sign language until after elementary school" (Fischer 88). This was due to the fact that doctors, teachers, and experts would emphasize that "deaf children would never learn to speak if they were allowed to sign. It is probably useful to point out that there was virtually no experimental evidence brought forward to support this contention; it was deemed to be self-evident" (Fischer 89). Even with integration, sign language was still seen as a teaching method that should not be taught until later in a child's life. This has implications for the oralism versus manuals debate, which is seen to still have effects on public perceptions and teaching methods, even in the 21st century.

Additionally, according to Fischer, in the late 20th century and early 21st century, “a deaf child would be placed in an oral-only preschool or elementary school for a number of years” and “only when it was obvious that the oral/aural approach was not succeeding was signing officially permitted in the classroom” (Fischer 50). Oralism still continued as a teaching method, even though it diminished a vital aspect of deaf culture- sign language. While Fischer says that there were “plenty of oral successes, she does not know “whether these people succeeded because of their oral education or in spite of it” (50). She also warns of the dangers of not teaching deaf children a first language (like sign language). She says that despite assumptions about sign language, “if children who are not exposed to a first language by school age, unless they are exceptionally talented, they will not fully master their first or possibly any language” (Fischer 51). Public perceptions of sign language still remained uneasy at the start of the 21st century, which impacted the use of potential ineffective teaching methods for deaf children.

The last insight I will delve into regarding the 21st century is the use hearing aids as well as cochlear implants. While cochlear implants were approved for adult use in 1985, they were approved to use in children in 2000, which is why they are a part of the 21st century section. Cochlear implants differ from hearing aids. While hearing aids “amplify sound, a cochlear implant bypasses damaged portions of the ear to deliver sound signals to the hearing (auditory) nerve” (Mayo Clinic). While both have assisted deaf children in the past couple decades, there have been various contentions with the use of assistive technology.

First, sometimes teachers are not aware of the difference between hearing aids and cochlear implants, as well as the limitations of each. For example, as Nicole Agro points out, “for

students with hearing aids, a teacher may think “they must be able to understand me if they have hearing aids, right? Wrong, all a hearing aid does is amplify sound to make it more audible, not necessarily intelligible” (Agro 4). When teachers assume the functions of a hearing aid, then they may assume the child is fully understanding them, even when they are not. Also, Agro says that sometimes, in these cases “students are accused of not paying attention and are wrongly labeled with conditions like ADD or ADHD” (4). If students are misdiagnosed, then this can negatively impact the services that they receive. Briefly circling back to Fischer’s point on language acquisition, if deaf children have a piece of assistive technology, sometimes they are not taught sign language since it is assumed their language acquisition will be the same as a hearing person. However, for reasons stated in the previous paragraph, this proves to be detrimental as far as language acquisition in a deaf child. Public perceptions of hearing aids and cochlear implants can be dangerous for deaf education, because if there is a lack of knowledge surrounding their capabilities, then deaf children may not receive the services or teaching methods they require.

Lastly, receiving cochlear implants is often sensationalized in the media. This is important to note, since it has implications for deaf education. In an article called “Hear Me Out” by Amelia Cooper, she discusses the contentions with cochlear implants, particularly with its sensationalization in the media. Youtubers have posted, as well as reposted, several videos of children receiving their cochlear implants for the first time, While it receives some positive comments, others are negative. While these videos often depict children smiling when they receive their implants, sometimes, “when the implant is first activated, some recipients often sob convulsively in a fearful response to the sudden flood of sensory inputs. This sort of somber

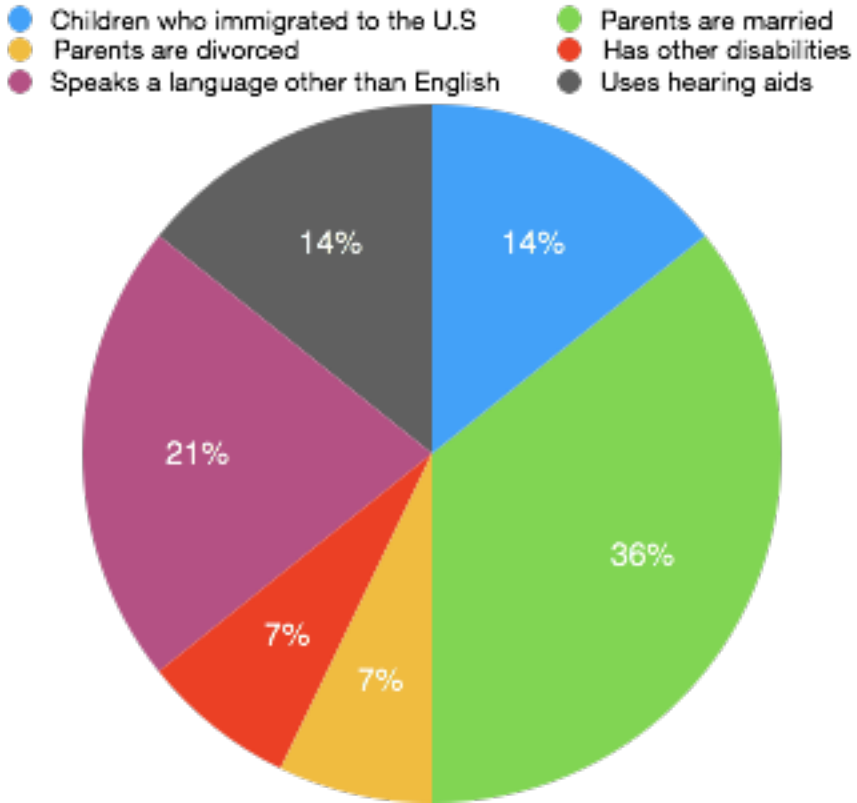
reaction is seldom seen online" (Cooper 4). Additionally, these videos "may downplay the recipient's recovery while glamorizing the activation experience, as they suggest that recipients can process and comprehend speech immediately" (Cooper 4). According to Cooper, it can take months or years before cochlear implants are fully functional (4). While cochlear implants have been contentious over the last couple decades, these debates provide insights into deaf education. Sometimes, cochlear implants or hearing aids are seen as an "end all be all" cure, when in actuality, it can take awhile before they fully function. If teachers assume students who have implants can hear perfectly or hear wonderfully right away after receiving them, then that can impact the child's outcome in the classroom. Also, if sign language is not taught because a student has a cochlear implant, then it can affect their language acquisition. It can also take away something that is incredibly important to deaf culture and the deaf community.

To summarize key points from the 21st century, it is vital to know that despite educational and assistive technology, students may still need additional resources in the classroom. While public perceptions of the negativity surrounding sign language still persisted for a bit in the 21st century, educational scholarship showed that these underlying assumptions must be debunked, since they are not backed by evidence. It is also important, as far as teaching methods, that teachers learn more about deaf culture and deaf teaching methods, since it is still not satisfactory in today's world.

In addition to my 21st century historical analysis, I also briefly touch upon case studies of deaf children from 2018, which helps inform my recommendations for the future of deaf education.

Case Studies

Case Studies in Deaf Education: Inquiry, Application, and Resources is a book that studies 35 deaf children. It provides a brief analysis of their lives and experiences, and offers questions at the end of each case study so readers can reflect upon each child. This book was published in 2018, so it informs my analysis regarding the 21st century. After analyzing all the case studies, I selected a sample of six deaf children who all had different experiences that influenced their deaf education journey. This provides further analysis that heeds the importance of considering the intersectionality of experiences when determining key factors in a deaf child's education. The names of these children are Ashwar (who comes from a bilingual family who speaks Arabic and English,), Jackie (whose parents are super involved, which was key to her education), Dashawn (whose parents are divorced and disagree about his education), and Celeste (who has other physical disabilities). I compare two children, Megumi and Santiago, in depth. A graph that summarizes the backgrounds of all six children is included in Figure One-



While I will touch upon some factors more than others when comparing these children, this chart is just a visual example of the intersectional aspects of these children's lives that I analyze. I look at the experiences of all six of these children, and outline those factors in the graph above. However, I only delve into comparisons for a couple of them in order to frame and conceptualize my argument. One common theme for these case studies that I discovered was that parental involvement impacted the child's educational outcome. For instance, one child, Santiago, immigrated to the Midwest region of the United States from South America. Numerous factors were against him as far as the education system, including an inconsistent use of hearing aids, his parents worries regarding their immigrant status, a low income background, and Santiago not making friends at school, which his teachers think is due to his lack of understanding of English. Not only does Santiago not have an adequate understanding of English in a predominantly English speaking school, but his hearing aid use is also inconsistent, and it is unknown if he was taught sign language. Thus, his language acquisition is behind other students his age. His parental involvement is also low, since his parents are preoccupied with their immigrant status, and also do not have the resources as a low income family to help Santiago.

Another deaf child, Megumi, on the other hand, has similar experiences to Santiago. Yet, I argue that her outcomes in her deaf education journey will be much more positive. Megumi came to the Pacific Northwest from Japan. While she is still working on learning both English and sign language in order to transition to her new school, there are factors separating her from Santiago. Her family is not low income, nor are they worried about their immigration status. Her mother is an engineer, which is a very lucrative position, and her father has multiple graduate

degrees (Guardino 100). Even though there are similarities between Megumi and Santiago, Megumi's parents will likely have more resources to help her on her deaf education journey. They will potentially be able to help her with language acquisition, as well as have the time to communicate with her teachers regarding any struggles she may face. Thus, parental involvement is crucial, especially in special education, and in this case, deaf education. While educational outcomes are not solely attributed to parental involvement, when a child is young, they do not always have the voice or knowledge to be able to advocate for themselves or their needs. This is where parental involvement is quite important, and can greatly impact a deaf child's future.

I included these case studies in order to emphasize intersectional experiences among deaf children. In the past, deafness was seen as a singular entity. Yet, as educational research progressed, it began to study and understand the complex relationships between the identities individuals hold, particularly involving race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, etc. Additional theories developed from this as well, such as DisCrit (which combines disability studies and critical race theory). Intersectionality deeply informed my research and recommendations for deaf education, so comparing the educational outcomes of these deaf children in the 21st century brought various insights to my research and recommendations that will build off the past 200 years as well as recent developments.

Recommendations for the Future

After analyzing key events in deaf education's history and seeing common themes emerge from these events, I developed four key recommendations for the future of deaf education, which are as follows:

Listening to Deaf Voices

After analyzing deaf education history, it is clear to see that deaf voices were not always listened to. An ableist agenda was always put at the forefront, continuously excluding deaf voices Therefore, one of my recommendations for the future is that deaf voices are heard, especially by abled individuals. By listening to deaf voices, education can become more equitable and include all. This was especially evident with the Deaf President Now protest. This was a prime example of how deaf voices were listened to, since student demands at Gallaudet University were met after the protest, and potentially played a role in larger scale events, like the enactment of the American with Disabilities Act in 1990. When deaf voices are not heard, it leads to an ableist agenda, such as oralist methods, or teachers not understanding the most effective methods for their students. One actionable initiative that people, especially educators, can take when listening to deaf voices is ensuring that communication is occurring through meetings or forums. In "Meeting the Diverse Needs of Students with Disabilities" Karen Ewing emphasizes that "teachers must work collaboratively with special educators with expertise in various disabilities to provide comprehensive learning environments for deaf students" and" focus on collaboration between deaf education and special education and promoting effective teaching practices across disciplines" (Ewing 19). Through working together with the deaf community, educators and

policy makers are then informed as to how deaf people feel, and what they want to see out of their education.

Take into account the intersectionality of students' experiences

Evident by the case studies I analyzed, taking into account the intersectionality of students' experiences can help inform resources and accommodations for them. For instance, if Santiago does not have proper help or resources at home, his resources and help at school may have to increase. Being informed about the struggles children face, as well as not just viewing their deafness as a singular entity will help inform educators regarding how they can best help the student. Additionally, by taking intersectionality into account, it can help children feel more secure in their deaf identity as well. This was evident in the Rotterdam Program in "Deaf Identity in Adolescence." In this program, children were able to discuss aspects of their deafness, as well as develop an awareness as to how they see themselves in relation to deafness, as well as other aspects of their identity. As a part of this recommendation, I suggest implementing programs like this one across the United States. This way, the program can not only help deaf children discover themselves and their identity, but how they feel about themselves and the world can help inform their needs in the educational system.

Hire more deaf educators as well as increase training and awareness

Training is important as well as representation in the deaf community. While deaf schools still persist, and are a wonderful option for deaf children, public schools must also ensure that they are a viable option for deaf children. Often, as stated in this paper previously, public school educators, with little to no knowledge on deaf education, may assume that hearing aids are a

"cure" for deafness, or that sign language may not be needed. Therefore, it is imperative that two actions are completed- more deaf educators are hired, and there is an increase in training for public school educators. Hiring more deaf educators will allow deaf students to be able to relate to their teachers, and these teachers will understand the experiences and struggles the student may be facing. Additionally, school districts must implement training regarding deaf education into their schools. If districts can do this, then public school educators will be more aware of the needs of deaf students, and not make assumptions regarding assistive technology or sign language.

Incorporate ASL into schools (especially at an early age).

Early language acquisition is vital to the success of deaf students. As demonstrated by the oralism versus manuals debate, as well as the delay in teaching children sign language in the 21st century, ASL was seen as second class in society, and not a vital aspect of a child's deaf education journey. Thus, with new scholarly research, it is evident that sign language is not only an important aspect of language acquisition, but it is also a vital facet of deaf culture. Banning it or not incorporating it into schools does a disservice to deaf children, since it does not allow them to grow and develop with this beautiful language. School districts must take steps to incorporate ASL into their schools, ensuring that educators working with deaf students learn it as well. This will not only eliminate potential communication barriers between students and teachers, but it will also increase positive language acquisition in children, and ensure that the child's deaf identity is respected. Once these classes are in place, both hearing and deaf students

(especially in pre-schools and elementary schools) should be exposed to ASL. Learning a language at a young age is important, since that is the opportune time to learn a new language and be able to acquire it in an effective manner.

Conclusion

Going back to the quote I started this paper with-“Since at least the time of l'Epee two hundred years ago, there has been a dynamic tension in the purpose of deaf education: is it to teach deaf people about the world or is it to make them part of the world?” (Fischer 35), this question has most certainly occurred throughout every era in deaf education. This especially reminds me of the “two worlds” metaphor that was prominent in the 20th century. As an advocate, the “othering” of people with disabilities has been occurring for far too long. In the case of deafness, while persevering deaf culture and identity is of the utmost importance, it is also key that they are able to feel a part of the world, since they are like everyone else. Thus, it is through analyzing monumental moments in the past 200 years that I show how public perceptions and teaching methods have changed overtime. This informs my insights regarding the future of deaf education, and what must be put in place in order to ensure that deaf education is not only adequate- but it thrives. While deaf education has improved in the past 200 years, it still has a long way to go. My recommendations are only a drop in the ocean compared to what must be done to rectify injustices in deaf education, as well as special education as a whole. Borrowing the words on the banner of the Deaf President Now protest: “We still have a dream.”

We, the students, advocates, activists, educators, legislators, and change makers, still have a dream for the future of deaf education. We will not rest until we get there.

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